



# Democratic Immigration Principles:

An access to earned legalization

Principios Demócratas de Inmigración:  
Acceso a una legalización ganada

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## **Democratic Statement of Principles on Immigration Policy**

Below we set forth our statement of principles on the critical issue of immigration. We welcome this historic opportunity to re-craft our immigration policies in ways that better reflect our core values of family unity, fundamental fairness and economic opportunity. We believe the principles we set forth appropriately recognize the significant contributions immigrants make to our country and how much we all will gain from a more rational immigration policy.

### **Family Reunification**

The current statutory ceilings for family and employment-based immigrant visas are no longer adequate and have resulted in unacceptable immigration backlogs. Immigrants in the United States work hard and pay their taxes to provide their families with a better chance for the future. It would be unjust to deny them the opportunity to be reunified with their families. The fact that a sibling of a United States citizen born in the Philippines must wait twenty-two years to be able to access legalization is just one example of our unjust immigration policy.

We need to reunify families. To accomplish this goal not only do we need to reduce the time it takes for the Immigration and Naturalization Service to approve family-based and employment-based petitions, but we need to adjust the current family and employment immigrant visa ceilings.

We should review other obstacles in our current immigration laws that are separating families, such as section 245(i) which should be restored.

### **Earned Access to Legalization**

An earned legalization program would adjust the status of the many hard-working, tax-paying immigrants, as well as students educated here, who have resided in the United States for many years. Legalizing these immigrants will provide employers with a more stable workforce and improve the wages and working conditions of all workers.

Many of the undocumented are from Mexico, Canada, Central and South America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and Europe. We should create a fair, uniform earned adjustment program that benefits all immigrants regardless of their country of origin.

Eligible immigrants should be long-time, hard-working residents of good moral character, with no criminal problems and who are otherwise eligible to become U.S. citizens. Permanent

residence should be available to those who are enrolled in English language and U.S. civics courses, demonstrate ties to their community and are admissible under our immigration laws.

### **Border Safety and Protection**

We must provide safety and security at our borders. We have the responsibility to ensure that our border patrol agents have the necessary resources to enforce the law. We also have the responsibility to our nation's immigrants to ensure safety and due process protections at our borders.

The chief cause of fatalities and safety hazards at our border is the ill fit between our immigration policies and reality. By providing orderly entry at our borders, we will enhance border safety and take a significant step towards shutting down the smugglers' market.

### **Enhanced Temporary Worker Program**

An enhanced temporary worker program should provide an appropriate mechanism for workers who wish to move between their home country and the U.S. to benefit from new economic opportunities and a way for recent arrivals to the U.S. to earn permanent status. Any such program must be structurally different from past guestworker programs to avoid the troubling legacy of exploitation and abuse.

We must be clear that any temporary worker program should not undermine the jobs, wages and worker protections of U.S. workers. It is important that both immigrants and United States citizens have meaningful access to educational opportunities and job advancement that increase economic success for all and contribute to the economic well-being of our nation. It must, therefore, be market focused to ensure that U.S. workers are not displaced and no hard-working persons are left behind. Moreover, this program can not stand alone; it must be accompanied by our legalization and family reunification priorities.

Participants in an enhanced temporary worker program must be given the same labor protections afforded U.S. workers, including the right to organize, the right to change jobs freely – not only between employers, but across economic sectors – and the fully enforced legal protection of their wages, hours and working conditions.

They should have an opportunity to become permanent residents and eventually citizens; they should also be allowed to bring their families. High-skilled temporary workers have both of these options; the same standards should apply to any temporary worker program for other essential workers.

### **Fairness for Immigrants and Legal Residents**

We must address the unfinished business of the last Congress. First and foremost, we must fix the 1996 immigration law. This includes restoring due process protections to permanent residents and other long-term residents affected by the 1996 immigration laws, ending discrimination against legal residents and reforming the INS to reduce the processing backlog.

In addition, we must address the special needs of agricultural workers and employers as encompassed in the agreement reached in the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress.